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Assistance in mine action

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

A decade after the international community committed itself to eliminate the scourge of anti-personnel mines, the United Nations can confidently celebrate a number of collective achievements: declining casualties from mines and explosive remnants of war; effective implementation of many key aspects of a strengthened international legal framework; explicit recognition of the importance of gender equality and the rights of persons with disabilities across the mine action sector; and a well-coordinated approach among the many United Nations system partners engaged in mine action on the ground and at Headquarters. The coherent inter-agency approach taken by this sector serves as a model for other cross-cutting issues addressed by the United Nations system.

A salute to the accomplishments of the United Nations must come with renewed commitment. The Organization is well-poised to persist in addressing old threats and to tackle emerging ones. Eliminating the horrendous impact of cluster munitions and effectively addressing the risks posed by explosive remnants of war will bring the United Nations closer to its collective goal of protecting civilians. The continued support of the international community will bolster the ability of mine-affected States to fulfil their commitments under the 1997 Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. The variety of detection and clearance machines available today and widespread use of proven land release strategies will return more contaminated or suspected land to civilian use more quickly. An increasingly sophisticated approach to the integration of mine action requirements into development plans and budgets will help to ensure the sustainability of essential initiatives and the development of national capacities for the future.

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The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 60/97 and provides an update on progress in the implementation of the United Nations inter-agency mine action policy and strategy. The report outlines the achievements of the United Nations Mine Action Team since the previous report of the Secretary-General (A/59/284) and recommends a forward agenda for mine action.

I. Introduction

1. Significant progress has been made in tackling the threat posed by mines and explosive remnants of war as a result of the concerted efforts of Member States, the United Nations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and affected communities. Since the 1997 Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, commonly known as the Anti-personnel Mine Ban Treaty, opened for signature 10 years ago, 155 countries have ratified or acceded to it. About 40 million stockpiled anti-personnel mines have been destroyed, and their production, sale and transfer have almost stopped. Over the past three years an unprecedented amount of mined and suspected hazardous area has been deemed mine-free and improved risk reduction tools and methods have contributed to a global decline in casualties. New international instruments on the rights of persons with disabilities give an impetus to our collective victim assistance advocacy and initiatives. The active engagement of all members of affected communities has increased our understanding of the impact of these munitions and has helped to ensure that mine action activities more effectively respond to their needs.

2. As the use of anti-personnel mines has diminished, the nature of the threat has changed. Anti-vehicle mines pose a significant challenge in many parts of Africa, and over 80 countries remain contaminated by explosive remnants of war. Recent conflicts illustrate the grave threat to civilians posed by explosive remnants of war and in some places, such as Nepal, improvised explosive devices have been the major cause of civilian casualties. While I welcome the entry into force of Protocol V on explosive remnants of war of the Convention on Conventional Weapons,[1] there is much to be done to ensure its universalization and implementation. Tragic recent events in Lebanon demonstrated again the horrendous humanitarian impact of cluster munitions both at the time of use and after conflict ends. Although the United Nations leads efforts to ensure that men, women, boys and girls are engaged in and benefit equitably from mine action activities, more must be done to achieve sustainable and tangible results. Diligence is required if the United Nations is to achieve the vision of a world free of the threat of mines and explosive remnants of war, where communities live in a safe environment conducive to development, where the needs of survivors are met, and where survivors are fully integrated into their societies.

3. The United Nations Mine Action Team, consisting of 14 departments, agencies, funds and programmes, has been at the forefront of efforts to ensure United Nations coherence. In June 2005, the United Nations Mine Action Team approved the Mine Action and Effective Coordination: The United Nations Inter-Agency Policy, which replaced the 1998 inter-agency policy. The policy articulates the vision and common positions of UNMAT, the legal framework that guides activities, the coordination mechanisms that maintain system-wide coherence, and the roles and responsibilities of Team actors. Highlighted throughout the present report, is the essential role that coordination plays in ensuring that United Nations support to countries affected by mines and explosive remnants of war is strategic, effective and efficient.

[1] Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects.

4. Since the previous report of the Secretary-General on assistance in mine action (A/59/284), implementation of the revised United Nations mine action strategy for 2001-2005 (A/58/260/Add.1) was completed. The 6 strategic goals and 48 objectives of that strategy were almost entirely realized. Lessons learned in the implementation of that strategy guided the development of the more results-oriented United Nations Inter-Agency Mine Action Strategy: 2006-2010. An update on the implementation of the strategy for 2006-2010 is provided in this report.

5. The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 60/97. In the resolution the General Assembly declared 4 April as International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action. Observance of that day in 2006 and 2007 brought global attention to the plight of victims of mines and explosive remnants of war, and the impact these munitions continue to have on peacebuilding, the return of refugees and internally displaced persons, sustainable development and the effective enjoyment of human rights. News and outreach materials emanated from some 40 countries. In opening the photographic exhibit capturing the impact of these weapons on men, women and children at the United Nations Secretariat on 4 April of this year, the Secretary-General cautioned the international community against wavering in the face of partial success in mine action to date and called for a redoubling of our efforts to realize a safer world.

II. The United Nations mine action agenda

6. The United Nations strategic goal is to work with national authorities and in partnership with NGOs, the private sector, international and regional organizations and others to reduce the humanitarian and socio-economic threats posed by mines and explosive remnants of war, at which point United Nations mine action assistance will no longer be necessary. All United Nations Mine Action Team efforts contribute to the achievement of this goal.

7. The work of the United Nations in mine action continues to be coordinated by the Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Mine Action, which meets as required at the principals' level, and monthly at the working level, chaired by the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations and the Director of the United Nations Mine Action Service, respectively. In 2006, the Inter-Agency Group established an informal sub-group in Geneva to foster effective information-sharing among Geneva-based members and with New York.

A. Strengthening and implementing the legal framework for mine action

8. The normative framework for United Nations mine action comprises the international instruments prohibiting and restricting the use of mines and addressing explosive remnants of war, international humanitarian law and relevant international human rights treaties.[2] The United Nations advocates for universal adherence to this framework and supports Member States to strengthen, monitor and implement relevant international norms. It undertakes this work in collaboration with the

[2] Mine Action and Effective Coordination: The United Nations Inter-Agency Policy, pp. 8-9 (2005).

International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining, and numerous NGOs and mine action organizations.

9. The United Nations continues to support the universalization and implementation of the Anti-personnel Mine Ban Treaty through active participation in meetings of States parties and the intersessional work programme, and assistance to States parties to fulfil their obligations. The success of the Nairobi Summit in late 2004 catalysed efforts to implement the Anti-personnel Mine Ban Treaty, and the Nairobi Action Plan 2005-2009 is guiding United Nations activities until the Second Review Conference in 2009. At that stage, the first 21 mine-affected States parties will face the 10-year clearance deadline imposed by the Treaty.

10. United Nations mine action programmes have supported Afghanistan, Angola, Burundi, Cyprus, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Montenegro, Serbia and the Sudan in the destruction of their stockpiles of anti-personnel mines. In December 2006, Angola destroyed its last stockpiles. The Sudan and Burundi are on track to destroy their stockpiles before their Anti-personnel Mine Ban Treaty deadlines in 2008. Within a complex operational environment, Afghanistan has destroyed close to 500,000 stockpiled anti-personnel mines as of July 2007. This process is ongoing but still incomplete owing to limited access to some stockpiled mines.

11. Since 2004 the United Nations has assisted Afghanistan, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Sudan with their Anti-personnel Mine Ban Treaty reporting and clearance obligations. In 2005, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) developed the completion initiative to accelerate progress in countries where a concerted effort and an investment of up to $10 million would assist a State party to the Treaty to meet its clearance deadline. In 2006, Albania finalized its National Mine Action Plan for Completion. The initiative is progressing in Zambia, Malawi, Mauritania and elsewhere.

12. In addition to advocating for the universalization of the Convention on Conventional Weapons Amended Protocol II Prohibitions or Restrictions on the use of Mines, Booby Traps and Other Devices, the United Nations has long supported efforts to strengthen existing international rules applicable to mines other than anti-personnel mines. The presence of anti-vehicle mines can shut down thousands of kilometres of roads and debilitate transportation systems, thereby preventing the safe return of displaced persons, obstructing the delivery of humanitarian aid and reconstruction activities, and substantially increasing the costs of United Nations operations. It was disappointing that the discussions on a new protocol on anti-vehicle mines within the Convention On Conventional Weapons context did not produce results in 2006, and the Secretary-General encourages States parties to pursue the strengthening of existing law in this area.

13. Effective implementation of Protocol V on explosive remnants of war by all parties to armed conflicts will improve the protection of civilians and peacekeeping and humanitarian personnel, and decrease the impact of explosive remnants of war on freedom of movement and on access to land and livelihoods. Protocol V entered into force on 12 November 2006 and so far only 32 States have expressed their consent to be bound by it. This November marks the First Conference of High Contracting Parties, at which many key decisions will be made on the operationalization of Protocol V. The Secretary-General urges all Member States to ratify or accede to Protocol V as a matter of urgency.

14. The international community has grown increasingly committed to eliminating the horrendous humanitarian impact of cluster munitions. The United Nations Mine Action Team has intensified its awareness-raising about the unacceptable harm caused by cluster munitions and provided technical input into relevant deliberations of Member States. In 2005, the Inter-Agency Coordination Group On Mine Action established the Cluster Munitions Working Group to develop common positions across the United Nations system on these weapons. That year, it commissioned the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research to publish studies on the impact of cluster munitions in Albania and the Lao People's Democratic Republic.

15. In March 2005, the United Nations Mine Action Service, UNDP and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) submitted proposed definitions of "cluster munitions" and "sub-munitions" to the Group of Governmental Experts of the Convention on Conventional Weapons, which have been used by Member States in the development of national legislation.[3] The United Nations contributed information to national legislation efforts in France and Australia. UNICEF supported the Cluster Munitions Coalition and Handicap International in their advocacy efforts. The United Nations Mine Action Service, UNDP and UNICEF, with assistance from the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining, conducted a survey in 2005 and concluded that among all the munitions found by clearance personnel, cluster munitions pose the highest level of threat to the safety of local populations and clearance operators.

16. Tragically, the current impetus for urgent action on cluster munitions was the widespread contamination of land, destruction of infrastructure, and loss of life and limb from these weapons in Lebanon in 2006. Lebanon was littered with hundreds of thousands of sub-munitions that failed to explode, drawing global attention to the humanitarian and human rights impact of these indiscriminate weapons. Reports to the Human Rights Council in September and October 2006 concluded that cluster munitions were used in violation of international humanitarian law and denied the enjoyment of civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights both during and after conflict.[4] At the Third Review Conference of States Parties to the Convention on Conventional Weapons in November 2006, the Secretary-General called for effective norms to address cluster munitions. The Convention on Conventional Weapons agreed to discuss the matter, and the Meeting of the States Parties to the Convention on Conventional Weapons in November 2007 will have before it a recommendation to decide how best to address the humanitarian impact of cluster munitions as a matter of urgency, including the possibility of a new instrument.

17. In early 2007 Norway, together with Austria, Ireland, Mexico, New Zealand and Peru, initiated a multilateral process to adopt, by the end of 2008, a legally binding instrument on cluster munitions that cause unacceptable harm to civilians. The Expert Workshop on Cluster Munitions, organized by ICRC in March 2007, brought together technical experts and government representatives to discuss all aspects of the weapons. After conferences in Norway and Peru, 75 States, including many affected and developing countries, are participating in this process. UNDP administered a sponsorship programme enabling 40 delegates from developing

[3] CCW/GGE/X/WG.1/WP.3 (8 March 2005).

[4] For the report on the Commission of Inquiry on Lebanon, see A/HRC/3/2 (23 November 2006). For the reports of the various thematic Special Rapporteurs on the situation in Lebanon, see A/HRC/2/7 (2 October 2006) and A/HRC/2/8 (29 September 2006).

countries to attend the Peru conference. United Nations Mine Action Team has participated in all cluster munitions events, sharing experience from operations in affected countries, and voicing concern about the immediate and long-term impact of these weapons on affected communities and development efforts.

18. The Secretary-General supports all Member States efforts to eliminate the horrendous impact of cluster munitions as soon as possible by reaching an agreement on an effective legally binding instrument. A comprehensive treaty would prohibit possession, production, use and transfer of all cluster munitions that cause unacceptable harm to civilians and include provisions for clearance, risk education, victim assistance and the human rights of survivors, assistance and cooperation, stockpile destruction, and compliance and transparency measures. It would also reaffirm the obligations of users of cluster munitions to distinguish between civilian and military objectives and to prohibit the use of cluster munitions in or near civilian populated areas.

19. This year two new legal instruments of significance for the survivors of mines and explosive remnants of war were opened for signature: the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol. Strong political support from Member States, the active engagement of civil society and persons with disabilities, including mine and explosive remnants of war survivors, ensured that this was the most rapidly negotiated human rights treaty to date. The United Nations Mine Action Team contributed to the process and is working to encourage ratification and implementation of the Convention.

20. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities does not create new rights, but rather outlines how States must ensure the existing civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights of persons with disabilities without discrimination. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities shifts the paradigm from a medical or charity perspective that views persons with disabilities as objects of treatment or welfare to a rights-based approach in which persons with disabilities are empowered to be engaged in decisions that affect them and to seek redress for violations of their rights. It provides an elaborate legal and monitoring framework for the achievement of the victim assistance obligations contained in the Anti-personnel Mine Ban Treaty. The new Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the national monitoring mechanisms established by the Convention will track the extent to which the rights of survivors of mines and explosive remnants of war are respected. The Secretary-General takes this opportunity to encourage all Member States to ratify the new Convention and its Optional Protocol without delay.

B. Integrating mine action in the United Nations system

21. Mine action is critical to the achievement of the United Nations highest aims: development, security and human rights for all. By drawing on the expertise and capacity of the various entities that make up the United Nations Mine Action Team, mine action considerations have been integrated into many aspects of United Nations work.

22. Mine action activities must benefit men, women, boys and girls equitably, whether in terms of access to cleared land, to mine risk education or to survivor services. Since 2004, the United Nations has been the leader in placing gender

equality on the mine action agenda. The production of the groundbreaking Gender Guidelines for Mine Action Programmes in 2004 catalysed the mine action community, and served as a model for other sectors of United Nations work. The Guidelines were followed by an audit of core mine action documents to ensure that gender considerations are routinely taken into account by staff and annual gender-equality workshops for field programmes. Such initiatives are coordinated by an Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Mine Action Steering Committee on Gender and Mine Action consisting of gender focal points from the United Nations Mine Action Team entities. The United Nations Mine Action Service represents the Steering Committee in United Nations gender mechanisms, including on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) and the Sub-Working Group on Gender and Humanitarian Action of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee.

23. This work is producing results at the country level. Uganda and Mozambique have recently mainstreamed gender considerations in their respective national mine action policies and strategies. In Tajikistan and Azerbaijan, mine action activities take into consideration and reap benefits for men and women. Programmes, such as in Afghanistan, have taken steps to ensure gender balance and a gender-friendly work environment. Targeted training for mine action staff on gender issues takes place in Afghanistan and Sri Lanka. The programme in the Lao People's Democratic Republic initiated a gender analysis of the impact of mines and explosive remnants of war, and in Burundi women played a vital role in the 2006 community survey, comprising 25 per cent of the survey teams and 40 per cent of the interviewees. In Mauritania, five gender-balanced survey teams conducted a landmine impact survey in 2006-2007. The United Nations Mine Action Service annual reports provide age- and sex-disaggregated casualty data and track gender balance across national and international staff.

24. Since 1996 the Security Council has recognized that mine action is vital to restoring international peace and security and to the deployment of United Nations peace operations in affected countries and territories. This recognition has grown and deepened over the years. Since August 2004, 45 of my reports to the Security Council and 12 Security Council resolutions have explicitly referred to mine action. The Mine Action Guidelines for Ceasefire and Peace Agreements were distributed to peacemakers engaged in discussions with parties to conflict in Nepal, and the 8 December 2006 peace agreement contains provisions on the transmission of information on marking, safe storage, clearance and destruction of mines, booby traps and improvised explosive devices. Recent mandates for mine action, such as for the Sudan, acknowledge that mine action efforts support peacekeeping operations as well as humanitarian and development activities. Mine action is fully integrated into the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan through the country team.

25. Children, particularly boys, continue to represent some 30 per cent of all casualties from mines and explosive remnants of war. In Lebanon and Nepal the percentage is even higher. Pursuant to Security Council resolution 1612 (2000), the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict has considered the extent to which mines, explosive remnants of war, and improvised explosive devices are responsible for the maiming and killing of children in Chad, Nepal, Somalia, Sri Lanka and Uganda. This year, the 10-year strategic review of the 1996 Machel Report on the impact of armed conflict on children notes the continuing

impact of mines and explosive remnants of war on children. The report notes the importance of preventive measures, such as warnings to civilians, when these weapons are deployed. Since 2004, Angola, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Colombia and Lebanon have reported that mines and explosive remnants of war are obstacles to the fulfilment of their obligations under the Convention on the Rights of the Child.[5]

26. Mine action facilitates the safe return of refugees and internally displaced persons and their reintegration and recovery. United Nations humanitarian response and funding appeals have effectively integrated mine action at the global and country-specific levels. In the field, mine action is a core element of either the protection or the early recovery cluster depending on the context. At the global level, United Nations Mine Action Service is the mine action focal point in the Protection Cluster led by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Geneva. In 2005, 2006 and 2007, mine action projects were integrated into Inter-Agency Consolidated Appeals in Burundi, Chad, Colombia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Nepal, the occupied Palestinian territory, the Russian Federation (Chechnya), Somalia, the Sudan, and Uganda.

27. The mine action community recognizes the link between mine action and development. UNDP is working with the United Kingdom, the Government of Canada and the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining, within the Development Assistance Committee of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development on the formulation of guidelines for the integration of mine action into development programming.

C. Planning, responding and evaluating United Nations engagement

28. The United Nations has made great strides in improving our mine action planning and rapid response. Within the Framework for Mine Action Planning and Rapid Response, a threat-monitoring matrix is developed monthly so that the Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Mine Action can determine a response based on the most comprehensive picture of the mine and explosive remnants of war threat available. In the past three years, Mine Action Planning Groups were formed for Guinea-Bissau, southern Lebanon, Pakistan and India (post-earthquake). United Nations Mine Action Service participated in Headquarters-based planning for relevant peace operations, including technical assessment missions to Darfur and Nepal. UNDP supported planning in Algeria, Egypt, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Iraq, Jordan, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Malawi and Zambia and responded rapidly to an ammunitions depot explosion in Mozambique in March 2007. An inter-agency assessment mission to south-central Somalia in June 2007 formulated options to address the significant explosive remnants of war contamination problem.

29. In 2006 the Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Mine Action implemented the rapid response mechanism for the first time since Iraq in 2003. The response in northern Guinea-Bissau, while modest, was pieced together from funding sources in United Nations Mine Action Service, UNDP and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, illustrating the limitations faced in conflict zones that are

[5] Initial Report of Angola, CRC/C/3/Add.66 (10 August 2004); Initial Report of Bosnia and Herzegovina, CRC/C/11/Add.28 (14 October 2004); Third Periodic Report of Colombia: Addendum, CRC/C/129/Add.6 (24 August 2005); Third Periodic Report of Lebanon, CRC/C/129/Add.7 (25 October 2005).

marginalized from the international community's attention. A review of the response revealed that the development of statements of work and the tendering of contractual services must be done more quickly. That lesson served the system well in August 2006 in southern Lebanon. Mine action staff remained in Tyre throughout the conflict, allowing for an accurate appraisal of the cluster munitions threat, as well as the maintenance of offices that later served as the United Nations humanitarian command centre. The expertise of staff, collaboration within the United Nations system and with external partners, and the generous support of donors produced a swift and comprehensive response, with clearance capacity on the ground within two weeks of the cessation of hostilities.

30. To further develop the United Nations rapid response capacity, in each of the past three years a training exercise has been conducted in Sweden, with the Swedish Rescue Services Agency, a key logistical and operational partner in rapid response. These exercises have included an increasing number of United Nations Mine Action Team members from the field and headquarters, non-governmental and international organizations, and representatives of Member States.

31. Evaluations are equally important to the United Nations Mine Action Team. Over the past three years, evaluations have been completed for United Nations programmes in Albania, Angola, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Russian Federation (Chechnya), Ethiopia, Ethiopia and Eritrea, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Somalia, Sri Lanka, the Sudan, Uganda and Yemen, many through contracts with external consultants or companies. Lessons learned have served to improve programming in particular countries and informed the development of the United Nations Inter-Agency Mine Action Strategy 2006-2010.

D. Servicing the mine action community

32. United Nations mine action activities depend on the support of donor countries and Member States. The portfolio of mine action projects, compiled by the United Nations Mine Action Service, UNDP and UNICEF, continues to be a unique resource tool for donors, policymakers, and mine action implementers. The portfolio is developed through an inclusive stakeholder process, and thus the product reflects coordinated national strategic plans and the proposed activities of credible implementing partners. Since the previous report of the Secretary-General, the preparation process has been fully automated, with country-based portfolio teams able to provide contemporaneous updates through an online, web-based system.

33. The 2007 Portfolio of Mine Action Projects presented a total budget of $437 million and featured 313 projects from 30 countries or territories and United Nations Headquarters. The unprecedented level of participation from stakeholders signals the maturity of the coordination mechanisms at the field level. A record 116 appealing agencies submitted proposals, compared to 103 in 2006, 91 in 2005 and 83 in 2004. Mine clearance activities consistently receive nearly half of the funds provided to portfolio projects, while targeted support to stockpile destruction, advocacy and victim assistance is on the rise. Mine risk education has generally received less support through the portfolio than through direct funding proposals to donors. Coordination among mine action donors and the United Nations continues to take place within the framework of the Mine Action Support Group, chaired by a

donor country, with secretariat support from the United Nations Mine Action Service on behalf of the United Nations Mine Action Team.

34. Contributions to the United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund for Assistance in Mine Action increased from the amount of $91,763,910, received during the 2004-2005 biennium, to the amount of $119,908,907, received during the 2006-2007 biennium as of 31 July 2007. In 2006 voluntary contributions were provided by a record 22 Governments, the European Commission, the Common Humanitarian Fund for the Sudan and private contributors. In addition, since 1 July 2002, a total of $172,192,241 was appropriated by the General Assembly from assessed contributions to support the mine action mandates of peacekeeping missions in the Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Lebanon, Ethiopia and Eritrea, Burundi, and the special political mission in Nepal. This reflects an increase from $6.5 million for the peacekeeping budget year 2002-2003 to $54.6 million for the budget year 2007-2008.

35. Mine action public information activities at the global level are coordinated by the United Nations Mine Action Service through an Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Mine Action Communications Working Group. In the lead-up to the Nairobi Summit on a Mine-Free World in 2004, three public service announcements were developed to draw attention to the impact of mines and Explosive Remnants of War. One of these won four international awards, and the announcements continue to be aired by media worldwide. United Nations Mine Action Team press trips to the Sudan and Tajikistan raised media awareness about the impact of mines and explosive remnants of war on people in these countries. To make mine action information more easily accessible, the United Nations Mine Action Team overhauled the Electronic Mine Information Network. Based on a survey of users, the site was restructured and redesigned with a new platform and other features. Most recently, a United Nations document library was added, allowing users to find United Nations reports and resolutions that refer to mine action. A new section on treaties and law aids users in tracking the development or implementation of relevant international instruments.

36. International Mine Action Standards remain the basis for mine action programming and are kept relevant through an annual review process that was initiated in 2001. The Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining assists the United Nations Mine Action Service to manage the review process, and the Mine Action Information Centre of James Madison University maintains the website where International Mine Action Standards can be found. During the period covered by the present report, new International Mine Action Standards were produced on the management of contracts in mine action and on the use of machines in mine action. Work on nine other new standards is under way and the Advisory Group on Mine Detection Dogs will soon approve a new series on the use of dogs. UNICEF and the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining published best-practice guidelines to enable implementation of the risk education component of International Mine Action Standards. The term "explosive remnants of war" has been introduced into all relevant International Mine Action Standards.

37. There have been significant developments in the field of mine action technology over the past three years. A much greater concentration on the use of machines has been promoted by a series of technical symposiums held in Croatia, hosted by the Croatian Mine Action Centre. Machines can reduce costs of clearance

and increase outputs in many situations. Since my last report, major advances have been made in the development and deployment of combined sensor detectors designed to reduce the false-alarm rates associated with metal detectors. Dual sensor detectors can increase the speed of manual demining by a factor of five in certain conditions. There is now a greater understanding of the advantages and effectiveness of open tiller arrangements.

III. Progress achieved in the implementation of the United Nations Inter-Agency Mine Action Strategy for 2006-2010

38. The United Nations Inter-Agency Mine Action Strategy 2006-2010 contains a strategic goal, four strategic objectives, a series of key activities related to each objective, and targeted indicators to measure success. A large proportion of activities are being implemented by field programmes that coordinate and operate significant clearance and mine risk education assets. These are United Nations Mine Action Service-managed programmes in Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia and Eritrea, Lebanon, Nepal, the Sudan and Western Sahara, UNDP-supported programmes in 38 countries, and mine risk education and victim assistance programmes supported by UNICEF in over 30 countries. Other members of the United Nations Mine Action Team support mine action activities related to their core functions. UNHCR supports mine action activities in Angola, Burundi, Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Lebanon, the Sudan and Uganda. The World Food Programme executes mine action as a part of its Road Rehabilitation Programme in southern Sudan. NGOs and commercial demining entities play a significant role in the realization of many of the strategic objectives.

A. Strategic Objective 1: Reduction of death and injury by at least 50 per cent

39. Marking and fencing, mine risk education and mine clearance prevent and reduce death and injury. With better surveillance systems and priority-setting mechanisms, mine risk education is increasingly targeting the most at-risk populations and linking to mine clearance, marking and community development activities. To improve the planning, monitoring and evaluation of risk reduction activities, UNICEF and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention finalized tools for the collection, storage, analysis and reporting of mine and explosive remnants of war casualties. Globally, the number of countries and territories reporting casualties and the level of casualties has declined substantially since 2003.[6]

40. Recent statistics from Cambodia indicate a significant decline in casualties, from 898 in 2004 to 450 in 2006, corresponding with the use of targeted approaches to risk reduction activities and innovative community-based programmes. In Afghanistan, a total of 180 victims have been reported since January 2007, of which 13 per cent are females and 63 per cent are under the age of 20. These data reveal that an average of 44 Afghans fall victim to mines and explosive remnants of war

[6] *Landmine Monitor Report*, 2004 and 2006.

each month, a 70 per cent decrease from the conservative estimate of 150 casualties per month in 2001. The reduction is attributed to a combination of clearance and mine risk education activities based on targeted survey. In Senegal, owing to intensive mine risk education, only one new mine victim has been recorded so far in 2007, compared with 13 in 2006, 10 in 2005 and 17 in 2004.

41. As a result of clearance and awareness efforts in Albania, no new victims have been registered since 2005 in the northeast. In the Kurdistan region of Iraq, the number of mine and explosive remnants of war victims fell from 201 in 2004, to 102 in 2005, 48 in 2006 and 28 during the first quarter of 2007. In Lebanon, following the 2006 conflict, the number of victims was reduced by over fifteenfold over six months thanks to well-coordinated and well-funded mine risk education and clearance activities. In Ethiopia, reports indicate that mine and explosive remnants of war incidents have decreased by more than 90 per cent since the nationwide landmine impact survey was completed in 2004.

42. There has been an increase in casualties in some countries owing to more conflict, economic insecurity, population movement, as well as better victim data collection mechanisms and analysis of mine and explosive remnants of war accidents reported through media. Although the ongoing survey in the Somaliland region of Somalia indicates a downward trend in mine and explosive remnants of war casualties, the Puntland region of Somalia experienced an increase in casualties from 42 in 2006 to 60 so far in 2007. In Chad, the number of victims rose steadily from 39 in 2005 to 139 in 2006 to 145 in 2007, owing apparently to the recent conflict and the establishment of better data collection mechanisms. As a result of the return of the refugees and internally displaced persons, casualty levels increased in the Sudan by 59 per cent from 2004 to 2006. Guinea-Bissau experienced a significant increase in female casualties, from 7 in 2005 to 21 in 2006, owing to an incident involving anti-vehicle mines in the border region with Senegal where women conduct informal trading activities.

43. The Secretary-General expresses his appreciation to all the brave mine action personnel who work to combat the threat of mines and explosive remnants of war, and extends his deepest sympathy for the scores who lost their lives or have been injured by these weapons or in direct attacks while conducting their tasks over the past three years. The recently updated *Landmine Safety Handbook* and accompanying interactive training course is now widely available to the United Nations family and other humanitarian workers to improve their protection.

B. Strategic Objective 2: Mitigate the risk to community livelihoods and expand freedom of movement for at least 80 per cent of the most seriously affected communities

44. Risk mitigation and expansion of freedom of movement is achieved through surveys, task prioritization for clearance and risk management, land release and impact assessment, and surveillance activities. The goal is to identify and prioritize communities suffering the highest levels of socio-economic impact and restriction of movement from mines and explosive remnants of war, and to target clearance activities to release land and facilities for productive use as quickly as possible. Land is often used for agricultural and community purposes, as well as national-level infrastructure development, such as road reconstruction, electrical networks,

gas lines, and irrigation systems. The United Nations has expanded its support to injury surveillance activities in Cambodia, Iraq, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Nepal, the Russian Federation (Chechnya), Uganda and Viet Nam to enable better planning and monitoring of risk reduction activities.

45. Since the previous report of the Secretary-General, landmine impact surveys were completed in Afghanistan, Angola, Burundi, Mauritania and Senegal, and ongoing surveys support risk mitigation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Chad, Guinea-Bissau, Iraq, Jordan, Malawi, Somalia, the Sudan and Yemen. The ongoing survey in Afghanistan estimates that 761 million square metres of land are contaminated, affecting about 4.2 million people or 8 per cent of communities. Between mid-2004 and the end of 2006, 310 square kilometres of contaminated land affecting high-impact communities, returnees, and socio-economic reconstruction projects were cleared. In Angola, survey activities estimated 17 per cent of all residents are living in 1,968 impacted communities, with 600,000 people living in high- and medium-impact areas. Overall, surveys reduced the area suspected to be affected from an ill-defined 30 per cent to a conservative estimate of less than 1 per cent of the national territory. Now 82 communities have been declared free of mines and a total of 6.3 million square metres of suspected land were released through area reduction and clearance. In Burundi, as a result of a community survey completed in May 2006, 86 per cent of the suspected hazardous areas in three southern provinces (Ruyigi, Rutana and Makamba) were declared mine- and explosive remnants of war-free.

46. Land released back to the communities in Mauritania enabled the provision of potable water to 60,000 Nouhadibou residents, the expansion of iron ore extraction facilities in Zourate, and the development of tourist facilities in Nouhadibou. It further increased access to grazing land for nomads in Nouhadibou, Zourate and Bir Mougrien and enabled the extension of city limits in Nouhadibou. In Uganda, demining achievements in 2006 and 2007 include the clearance of 29 suspected hazard areas in the subregions of Lango, Teso, Acholi and Rwenzori. In total, more than 13 square kilometres of land have been made available for use, while another 3 square kilometres were cleared in early 2007 allowing the safe return of refugees and internally displaced persons. In Mozambique, 53,516,569 square metres of land were returned to communities as a result of clearance and survey activities during the period 2004-2006. In Albania, more than 3,250,000 square metres, mostly pasture area, were released to the communities during the reporting period. The entire 42 kilometres section of the Albania-Kosovo border was cleared, allowing for safe border control.

47. In Ethiopia, priority for mine clearance is given to those areas associated with animal herding, wood and water collection, and other agricultural activities. Almost 9 million square metres of land were cleared in 2006, up from six million in 2005, and 8,822,860 square metres of farming and grazing land were returned to productive use. Since September 2006, UNMEE has cleared some 2,200,000 square metres of land and 1,200 kilometres of road in the temporary security zone, enhancing the safe mobility of United Nations personnel, NGOs, and the local population, as well as securing additional land for the safe return of internally displaced persons and refugees. In Cambodia, more than 130 square kilometres of land have been returned to communities for agricultural, community roads, infrastructure, and irrigation purposes between 2004 and June 2007.

48. In southern Lebanon, the Mine Action Coordination Centre continues to find additional cluster strike areas. Between August 2006 and July 2007, 31 per cent of the surface and 17 per cent of the sub-surface of 37.1 million square metres of contaminated area were cleared, and 7 per cent was returned to the communities as a result of action other than clearance. In the post-conflict emergency phase, high-priority locations for clearance were schools, houses and hospitals. Since then, the operational response has focused on the clearance of agricultural lands to secure livelihoods. All known high-impact areas are on target to be cleared by the end of 2007, with a reduced capacity needed throughout 2008 to address remaining priority areas.

49. Yet the United Nations faces challenges in countries of significant size, where mine action operators must overcome considerable security, logistical and sometimes funding obstacles, such as in Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Iraq, Somalia and the Sudan. In Iraq, the landmine impact survey has been completed in only 13 of the 18 governorates, indicating that at least 2,723,386 persons are at risk and 1,718 square kilometres of land is contaminated. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, reliable data on contamination are available only for a few surveyed areas (northern Katanga Province, part of southern Katanga and Equateur Provinces, and part of Ituri District). Overall, 3,200,000 square metres were cleared, along with 260 kilometres of roads. In the Sudan, a country-wide landmine impact survey began only in mid-2006, and limited available information indicates that, as of June 2007, 21 of 26 states might be affected by mines or explosive remnants of war. Still over 24 million square metres of cleared land and over 1,768 kilometres of cleared road has improved freedom of movement for internally displaced persons, humanitarian workers, and peacekeepers, and has enabled local farmers to resume business throughout the Sudan. After decades of route closures, roads connecting northern and southern Sudan were declared safe from mines or explosive remnants of war.

C. Strategic Objective 3: Integration of mine action needs into national development and reconstruction plans and budgets in at least 15 countries

50. Mainstreaming mine action into development planning and budgeting ensures that demining priorities reflect the development agenda and the Millennium Development Goals, and opens up financing of mine action activities to the wider development process. It also ensures the sustainability of mine action through the allocation of more national resources and the integration of survivors' long-term needs into the health, education, social welfare and employment sectors. The United Nations assists initiatives that address the needs of victims as part of national programmes for all persons with disabilities.

51. The United Nations assisted 13 countries to integrate mine action into their national development plans and budgets and to mobilize national resources to finance demining activities. Mine action is integrated into the Afghanistan Compact and the Afghan National Development Strategy, and in Uganda's Peace, Recovery and Development Plan and Poverty Eradication Action Plan. In 2005, Mozambique included mine action as a cross-cutting theme in its poverty reduction package, and the Government continued to provide financial contributions to activities. In

Cambodia, mine action is integrated into the National Strategic Development Plan and the common country assessment/United Nations Development Assistance Framework (CCA/UNDAF), and in 2006 the Government invested $800,000 towards that end. The Government of Angola contributed $19,440,000 and 40 Government staff towards mine action operations in 2006. As a part of UNDAF, mine action activities in Albania are fully incorporated in the regional development strategy of the Kukes region. Both Ethiopia and the Sudan have included mine action in the CCA/UNDAF, and mine action is integrated into both northern and southern Sudan budgets. In Senegal, mine action is included in the country programme action plan and is a major component of the Casamance rehabilitation programme.

52. The United Nations supports victim assistance in Afghanistan, Albania, Angola, Cambodia, Colombia, Guinea-Bissau, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, the Sudan, Tajikistan, Uganda and Yemen, among other countries. In Uganda, victim assistance indicators to monitor social and economic reintegration of mine survivors and access to their rights are ready for use in the surveillance network database. The Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development are actively engaged in addressing victims' needs. Mine survivors are trained and currently producing banana rope in a manufacturing cooperative, established as a public-private partnership between the Kasese Landmine Survivor Group and a high-end manufacturer.

53. In north-eastern Albania, the establishment of a community-based rehabilitation network has increased medical care and rehabilitation, and socio-economic reintegration for survivors. The Yemen Mine Action Centre provides medical assistance, rehabilitation, training and income-generating opportunities to survivors. With the support of UNICEF and other implementing partners, the departments of Bolivar, Sucre, and Antioquia in Colombia provide physical and psycho-social rehabilitation for 265 people with disabilities, including 65 mine victims. In Iraq, the National Mine Action Authority, UNDP, UNICEF and the World Health Organization arranged two workshops on mine risk education and victim assistance matters, and initiated an "injury surveillance" capacity development pilot project to assess victim assistance needs by 2008. UNICEF is supporting the Government of Ethiopia to integrate disability into development planning, and to revise national Government policies and standards.

54. Over the past two years, the United Nations Mine Action Centre in Afghanistan assisted the Ministry of Public Health to draft disability guidelines and develop a victim assistance strategy. The United Nations Human Security Trust Fund project in the Sudan compiles data on the needs of survivors and pilots responsive interventions. After two stakeholder consultative workshops in 2007, bringing together authorities from the north and south, the National Strategic Framework on Victim Assistance: 2007-2011 was approved by the Government, and a network to design, implement and monitor activities has been established.

D. Strategic Objective 4: Assist the development of national institutions to manage the landmine/explosive remnants of war threat, and at the same time prepare for residual capacity in at least 15 countries

55. The United Nations helped many countries to take important steps towards full ownership of their mine action programmes since my last report. The Ethiopia mine action programme will be transferred to full national ownership by the end of 2007. In Yemen, the mine action programme no longer requires the support of a UNDP Chief Technical Adviser. The United Nations Mine Action Service assisted the Government of Burundi to develop its national mine action structure and capacities, handing over responsibilities to the Government, with continued support from UNDP, in August 2006. In Iraq, UNDP supported the development of a national NGO, employing more than 150 Iraqis, to undertake mine action activities in the Basra region. Albania's National Clearance Capacity, begun in 2004, has established six teams of national deminers.

56. National mine action capacities have markedly expanded in many countries. In Senegal, the National Commission for the Implementation of the Anti-personnel Mine Ban Treaty became the national mine action authority, and a national mine action centre was established in August 2006. In Mauritania, the humanitarian demining office was transferred from the military to the Ministry of Economy and Finance in 2007 and now has its own budget for staff salaries, office costs and an operational component. In Angola, since its establishment in 2002, the national mine action authority has significantly developed its capacity in high-level planning, guidance, standard-setting, accreditation of operators and quality assurance. In Afghanistan, a national programme director now leads the United Nations Mine Action Centre in Afghanistan, while a stronger Mine Action Consultative Working Group remains a guiding body. The United Nations Mission in Nepal assisted the formation of a National Mine Action Steering Committee under the chairmanship of the Ministry for Peace and Reconstruction, and the implementation of a training programme to improve the Nepalese Army clearance capacity.

57. Building mine risk education national capacity is also an important component of United Nations work. In Armenia, UNICEF in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Science ensured teacher training in 60 affected communities. In Burundi, 75 schoolteachers were trained to provide mine risk education as part of school curricula. With UNICEF assistance, local NGOs in Bosnia and Herzegovina developed eight mine risk education plans for highly impacted communities. And 500 teachers from 22 schools in Dushanbe, Tajikistan, have been trained to design and continue mine risk education in their schools. In Afghanistan, mine action-specific units are being established within the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Public Health, and Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled.

58. National capacity-building in mine action also takes place at the global level. UNDP facilitates the national mine action staff exchange programme, which in 2006 involved some 30 nationals visiting peer programmes. In partnership with Cranfield University and James Madison University, UNDP also organized two senior and middle management courses for national mine action practitioners in 2006. UNICEF holds annual workshops with its national and international mine action focal points from 33 countries. The Annual International Meeting of Mine Action National

Directors and United Nations Advisers is a dynamic capacity-building forum that brings together national authorities, United Nations staff, donors, and the NGO community. Since the previous report of the Secretary-General, the United Nations Mine Action Team organized three annual meetings in Geneva, hosted by the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining. The tenth annual meeting, held in March 2007, had the highest attendance to date with 248 participants, including 31 national directors and officials, many of whom also received training on relevant international treaties. The meetings are now the primary venue for reviewing and improving approaches to capacity development, the foundation for national institutions to effectively manage mine action without United Nations assistance.

IV. United Nations mine action agenda: looking forward

59. The measurable progress in the mine action sector over the past 10 years is a great achievement. The coherent, collective and well-resourced efforts of the international community and affected countries have borne fruit, and illustrate again that together we can effectively tackle global challenges. For the United Nations, mine action has also been a success. The coordination architecture at Headquarters and in the field, the inter-agency policy and strategic approach, the development of international guidance standards and the gender mainstreaming practices are all examples of achievements in the mine action sector that have served as models for United Nations system engagement in other cross-cutting, peacebuilding issues.

60. Yet, it is too early to turn attention away from mine action. Member States, the United Nations Mine Action Team, and the mine action community at large must stay committed to the work that remains to be done. The Secretary-General recommends a forward-looking agenda in which:

(a) Member States ratify or accede to the legal framework for mine action: the Anti-personnel Mine Ban Treaty; the Convention on Conventional Weapons Amended Protocol II and Protocol V; and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol;

(b) Affected States, donors and mine action practitioners redouble their efforts to promote compliance with the Anti-personnel Mine Ban Treaty as States parties face clearance deadlines in 2009 and 2010;

(c) States parties to Protocol V reach agreement on establishing standards for its effective implementation that best ensure the protection of civilian populations drawing on lessons learned from the implementation of other relevant treaties;

(d) Member States make all efforts to urgently eliminate the horrendous humanitarian, human rights and development impact of cluster munitions by reaching an agreement on a comprehensive and effective legally binding instrument by the end of 2008;

(e) Affected States, donors and the mine action community expand resources and increase programming support for all persons with disabilities, including mine and explosive remnants of war survivors, particularly in the health, social welfare, education and employment sectors, guided by the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities;

(f) Member States, with the support of mine action practitioners, prevent harm to civilians, particularly children, by providing effective warnings, risk education and other preventive measures when cluster munitions, explosive ordnance, anti-vehicle mines and improvised explosive devices are being deployed;

(g) Member States support the development of United Nations capacity for rapid mine action response to ensure early deployment of risk reduction capacities that will directly contribute to the protection of civilians and humanitarian workers in emergency situations;

(h) Member States continue to recognize the critical role of mine action to peacemaking, peacekeeping and peacebuilding in United Nations resolutions, including the efficient delivery of humanitarian assistance and the safe return of refugees and internally displaced persons, and ensure comprehensive mandates and sufficient resources for United Nations mine action activities;

(i) Affected States, donors and mine action practitioners increase efforts to advance gender mainstreaming and gender balance in mine action programmes, and monitor the extent and effectiveness of efforts to this end;

(j) Affected States, donors, and mine action practitioners develop and implement methodologies for the systematic assessment of the impact of mine action activities on all members of beneficiary communities in order to secure the most equitable and effective operational tasking and use of released land;

(k) Affected States and donors manage the mainstreaming of mine action into development processes vigilantly to ensure that clearance activities address development priorities and avoid mine action programmes being overlooked in donor funding arrangements, resulting in less money for essential activities;

(l) The mine action community at large exploits the advantages of the variety and sophistication of machines available today and enables the increased mechanization of mine and explosive remnants of war clearance;

(m) Member States strongly support the effective coordination of the United Nations Mine Action Team and implementation of the United Nations Inter-Agency Mine Action Strategy 2006-2010;

(n) Mine action donors remain coordinated and committed to the goal of a world free of the impact of mines and explosive remnants of war through the consistent provision of necessary resources, in particular to support the building and development of national capacities in mine action.